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SOCIAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS

Letter dated 22 July 1999 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Singapore to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

On behalf of the 50 delegations listed below, I have the honour to request that the attached joint statement be circulated as a document of the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1999 under agenda item 14 (h):

Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ghana, Guyana, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Mongolia, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

(Signed) Margaret Liang
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

GE.99-64755 (E)

Annex

Joint statement on the question of the death penalty submitted by Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ghana, Guyana, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Niger, Nigeria, Oman, the Philippines, Qatar, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, the Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Arab Emirates, the United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam, Yemen and Zimbabwe

We would like to place on record our disassociation from Commission on Human Rights resolution 1999/61 on the question of the death penalty for the following reasons:

(a) There is no international consensus that capital punishment should be abolished. Article 6, paragraph 2, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that "sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes". This view was reflected in the joint statement contained in document E/1998/95, in which 54 delegations disassociated themselves from Commission on Human Rights resolution 1998/8. This view was also reflected in the joint statement contained in document E/1997/106, in which 34 delegations disassociated themselves from a similar Commission on Human Rights resolution (resolution 1997/12) and the joint letter contained in document E/CN.4/1998/156, in which 51 delegations expressed their reservations prior to the adoption of Commission on Human Rights resolution 1998/8.

(b) Capital punishment has often been characterized as a human rights issue in the context of the right of the convicted prisoner to life. However, this must be weighed against the rights of the victims and the right of the community to live in peace and security.

(c) The question of whether to retain or abolish the death penalty should be carefully studied by each State, taking fully into account the sentiments of the people and the state of crime and criminal policy. It is inappropriate to make a universal decision on this question or to propose such action in the forum of an international organization.